

Tibetan Oral History Project Interview H.0202.06

*Taring and Sambo were important aristocratic officials in the Tibetan government. They describe how the resident Chinese were expelled from Tibet in 1948. They discuss the Tibetan Delegation attending the Asian Relations Conference where they met Nehru and Gandhi and about the Tibetan government sending a "Congratulation for the Victory in WWII" delegation to China. The interviewees discuss the establishment of a broadcast station in Tibet and the delegation that was trying to negotiate with the Chinese in 1950. The 13th Dalai Lama's penchant for correcting the writing of others is also discussed with respect to Geshe Sherap Gyatso and Jone Lama and the new edition of the Kangyur.*

(Mr. Sambo) On September 10, 1950 the Chinese liberated the Chamdo area of Tibet and then Ngabö stayed with them for a while. At that time, Phünwang said that when the Tibetan Government deported all of the Chinese spies, the Tibetan Government had sent away only the Communist Chinese agents and had kept a Guomindang spy. When asked which Guomindang agent was not deported, he said that it was the geshe from Drepung Monastery. He was the one who was able to stay because the abbot of Gomang College guaranteed that this particular geshe was not an agent but a true student of the college. On the basis of this assurance, he was allowed to stay in Tibet. Later, in 1951 when I returned via India, I met him in Kalimpong. He was a bald Chinese man. I learned a bit about photography from him such as how to develop negatives, etc. I don't remember his name, it something like was Shing Tong.

Q

Did Phüntso Wangye know all of the Russian, Japanese, and British agents in Tibet?

A

(Mr. Taring) Phünwang arrived before the communists' arrival. He was a spy. He was also among those expelled who came back again later [with the Chinese communists].

Q

That was later. When he came back, he came as a high officer so there was no question of sending him back and everybody showed him respect.

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A

(Mr. Taring) Phünwang's brother Thuwang [tib. thub dbang] was also involved. The man known as Thuwang had a scar on his forehead.

Q

This question is addressed to Sambo. When you went to India in 1947 with the delegation to give "Congratulations on the Allied Victory in WWII," did you attend the Asian Relation Conference in Delhi? In other words who arranged it and why was the Tibetan government invited by the Indian Government to attend the Conference?

A

(Mr. Sambo) The reason why we went was as a result of Richardson's suggestion. He informed the Government of Tibet by saying that a big conference was being held in Delhi that was to be attended by many nations. If the Tibetan Government could participate in it, then later it will be of great help to prove the independence of Tibet. So if we could somehow attend the meeting, it would be useful for Tibet in the future. He was supposed to have said that. After that, India extended an invitation to the Tibetan Government to attend the meeting. So when he said that it will be beneficial to show that Tibet is independent, it seems that the Tibetan Government was pleased and decided to send its delegation.

(Mr. Taring) Who was sent with Theiji Sambo?

(Mr. Sambo) My father was Theiji. Khenjung Lobsang Wangye [tib. blo bzang dbang rgyal] was sent with my father. The delegates were allowed by the Tibetan government to suggest whomever they wanted as staff so my father asked for me as his assistant and Khenjung Lobsang Wangye asked for Küngala [tib. kun dga' lags] as his assistant. We had two interpreters. One was Kapshö Thöndrup [tib. ka shod don grub] and the other was Kyibuk [tib. skyid sbug]. Then it was pointed out that there may be some questions about religion during the meeting, so it was decided that a learned scholar on religion should be also sent, so geshe Rinzin Tempa [tib. rig 'dzin bstan pa] of Drepung and another geshe from Ganden monastery were sent. All together, the delegation consisted of eight people. Any matters related to religion would be taken care of by the other two. When I reached Yadong, a messenger came and said that we have to take the national flag and they gave us a flag.

Q

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What kind of flag did we have?

A

(Mr. Sambo) It was the same flag with the lion and the snow mountain that we presently have in India. Then from Yadong, we went to Gangtok and then to Kalimpong. Somewhere around there, somebody told my father that there is no need for Tibetan representatives to attend the meeting since China was attending. Although we heard such things, we decided to go and when we reached Calcutta, we sent our servants in advance, about a day earlier by train. My father told them to inform the people in Delhi that you are the servants of the Tibetan Delegation. Probably they have made arrangements for our accommodation, but if not, then we should not go. At that time Mr. Dorje Gyelpo [tib. rdo rje rgyal po] was there too.

(Mrs. Taring) He was the secretary to Pandatsang.

(Mr. Sambo) At that time, he was yet to become Pandatsang's secretary.

(Mrs. Taring) Later he was my colleague when we were teaching at the school in Trungji Linga. Yesterday, a monk who was one of his cousins came here from Tibet.

(Mr. Sambo) The servants were sent earlier because my father heard that the Chinese had objected to the Tibetan Delegation's participation in the Asian Conference. If that was true, and if the delegation would have to return from Delhi without attending the conference, then it would be embarrassing so in order to avoid that, they sent the servants beforehand to find out. Since there was no negative sign of such a thing, we proceeded to Delhi by air. The leaders of the delegation, two assistants, two interpreters, and Sodrön La, all traveled by air. The Indian Government had sent some people to receive us at the airport. While passing from the airport towards our residence, we passed Jawaharlal Nehru's house. My father stopped the car and went to Nehru's house. Nehru was not in that time so we proceeded towards Constitution House where they had made arrangements for us to stay. There were other delegations also staying in the same house.

The next morning, Nehru himself came to see us at our place. My late father told Nehru that we wanted to come to see him, but now you have come to see us. That does not look nice my father told Nehru. Nehru replied, "It doesn't matter. Yesterday you came to my place, but I was not in. Anyway, I wanted to meet the Tibetan Delegation. So I came here." Nehru was very busy and left immediately. We had a letter from the Dalai Lama to Nehru along with gifts including an image of the Buddha, some gold, carpets (large and small), musk, pilose antler, etc. Probably about 15-20 pieces and we took them and went to Nehru's house.

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Q

How did you take these gifts to Nehru's house?

A

(Mr. Sambo) We took them in a car. Probably each person carried something in their hands and we took them to Nehru's house. At that time, Nehru offered us tea as well as some fruits. Perhaps it was Indira Gandhi who brought the tea. Nehru told my father that she was his daughter, but she had not been feeling well, so she was staying at home and looking after us. Since I heard Nehru had only one daughter, it must have been Indira Gandhi. My father told Nehru that he had come for the conference and that if any discussions on the Indo-Tibet border issues arose, he had brought 10 boxes of documentation on the border issue with him. Nehru replied, "This time, there will be no discussion of the border question at all." Nehru further stated, "Till now, India has been under the colonial rule of Britain and India's window was fixed only to London. However, now that India will be free and independent, we would like to enlarge our horizons. So instead of fixing our window to London only, we would like to build better understanding and friendly relations with other nations, specifically, neighboring Asian countries. So this is only just the beginning of our good relations with our neighbor states." To this my father replied, "That is very good, but in case there is any need for discussion we would like to discuss it." Then we had a letter addressed to Lord Waverly, who was the Viceroy of India, but he had already left India and later Lord and Lady Mountbatten had come. We changed the names and presented the letter to him.

Q

Was India not independent at that time?

A

(Mr. Sambo) India had not regained her independence yet. But at that time, it had already been decided to give India independence. The conference was in the month of April, and India became free in the month of August, 1947.

Q

Did you meet Gandhi that time?

A

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(Mr. Sambo) Yes, we met him. We also met Sarojini Naidu, A Avedori, and some other people. When we were in Delhi, Gandhi was not in Delhi, but was somewhere in a village.

(Mrs. Taring) I heard when you presented a khata to Gandhi, he asked whether it was made in Tibet, is that true?

(Mr. Sambo) Maybe, I don't remember. Three or four days after the meeting, Gandhi came. It was quite uncertain. Some said Gandhi was coming while some said he would not be coming. Some said he had left already, and some said he was coming tomorrow.

(Mrs. Taring) Who were the interpreters at that time? Was it Kyibuk and Kapshö?

(Mr. Sambo) Yes. They were the interpreters.

Q

How was their knowledge of English?

A

(Mrs. Taring) Kyibug was the number one. He was better than Kapshö, but Kapshö was also very good.

(Mr. Sambo) Then the meeting started and we all attended the meeting.

Q

What kind of clothing did you wear?

A

(Mr. Sambo) We wore Tsechuma [a kind of Tibetan gown]. On the first day, my father wore the hat called Toksha [tib. tog zhwa] and Küngala and I wore Tsechuma over the garment called Gogtse [tib. gua zi]. Everyone was looking at us. Probably they found our dresses funny or different.

Q

Did Nehru attend the meeting? Did he look at you?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes, he did attend and he looked at us, smiled, and then he came to greet us. Our government thought we had to put up the Tibetan flag, but I looked around and could not find any place to put our flag. However we noticed that the Tibetan flag was placed under the table where our delegation was sitting. It was only different in size from ours, but otherwise it was the same. Moreover when I looked at the other delegates, I saw

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that the Chinese flag was placed in front of the Chinese delegates. Otherwise I could not recognize any other [countries'] flags. So I wondered where to place the Tibetan flag which we had brought with us because our flag was already there. As far as I was concerned, I couldn't understand a single word that was said in that meeting.

Q

Didn't the interpreters translate for you?

A

(Mr. Sambo) We only had two interpreters, and both of the interpreters were sitting with the 2 leaders, so my colleague and I just sat there, that's all. Sometime before this, the Chinese delegates had said that there was no need for a Tibetan Delegation since the Chinese Delegation was attending the meeting. My father had heard about this statement and was quite worried. The conference was divided into sub-committees, and my father had heard that the Chinese had said this in one of these sub-committees. My father told us he heard about that, and since they did not say it in our presence, he took one of the interpreters and went to inquire about it. Later he found out that no such statement had been made by the Chinese in any of the committees. It was just a rumor.

Then one day the Chinese invited us to a dinner and we attended it. They invited no other guests except us. We had some conversation for a while and finally they said that a large area of Tibetan territory is being occupied by British India and the Chinese Government is continuing talks with London regarding this. They said that if the Tibetan Government tried to negotiate about these, it would not serve any purpose and would not be beneficial. They further said that this may not come up in this conference, but in case the Tibetan authorities decide to discuss this, then you will be the loser. Just in case discussions on the border issue come up, we will talk on behalf of the Tibetan Government. The Chinese further asked whether this was acceptable to us. At this time, our interpreter Kyibuk said, "Why don't we say thank you." I was very young at that time, but I thought how stupid our interpreter was. So my father replied, it cannot be done like that. We were told that there will be no discussion on the border issue, so that is very good, but if there is ever any discussion on the border issue, we have brought all the related documents here with us and we would like to discuss it by ourselves, because we were sent here for this purpose. You do not need to take the trouble of discussing it on our behalf. So the interpreter translated this to the Chinese, and then the dinner was over. Then they gave Rs. 10,000/- each for the two leaders, and Rs. 5,000/- each for the other members from the Guomindang Government to cover personal expenditures.

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(Mr. Taring) Was it given by the Indian Government?

(Mr. Sambo) It was given by the Guomindang Government. My father told them that we have sufficient cash given by the Tibetan Government and we don't need this gift, but thank you. We returned all the money, but the Chinese insisted, saying if you don't take the money then would you please send a telegram stating that you didn't accept the money to the president of China? My father agreed, and he sent the telegram with the same message dictated by the Chinese. One day after that, we heard Gandhi had come. We were still not sure, so I was told to enquire whether Gandhi had really come or not. I went to make the inquiry.

Q

Where did you go?

A

(Mr. Sambo) I went by car.

Q

How could you go by a car without knowing the language? Did you tell the driver, Gandhi? Or what?

A

(Mr. Sambo) I had a friend called Pomsur who spoke Hindi very well. We came to Constitution House where there were a number of cars meant for the delegates. They had to wear the conference badge and could tell the driver to go wherever they want. They probably reached the Old Delhi side. Gandhi lived in the Harijan Lane [the untouchable's area]. The area was very poor and sometimes they [Tibetan delegates] had to walk, and sometimes they had to roll up their pants to reach Gandhi's place. Gandhi's house was small with a small canopy over its veranda. Inside there were about ten chairs and a small table. A man came out from the house who was probably Gandhi's private secretary. We asked the man whether we can see Gandhi. We further told him that we have a letter from the Dalai Lama. After a while he came out again and told us to come the next morning at 9 or 10 am. So we prepared the gifts and stuck the Dalai Lama's name on the gifts saying that it is offered by the Dalai Lama. On the next day at about 7:30 am we all left for Gandhi's house. By the time we reached there, already many people had come. They must be the Indian Maharajas. They were wearing rich clothes, shining shoes and golden ornaments. At about 9 a.m. we were asked to come in. We all walked in and presented the

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gift of an image of Lord Buddha. Gandhi looked at the image carefully. Gandhi was devoid of any pomp and show, which was clear from his place of living.

(Mrs. Taring) Didn't Gandhi say when he looked at the image, "Does the Buddha feel cold?"

(Mr. Sambo) He did. Gandhi took the Buddha's image in his own hand and said, "So this is the Buddha's image. It is strange that although the Buddha can feel neither hunger nor cold, you have covered him in clothing." To this the Tibetan Delegates didn't say anything, but laughed.

[NOTE In Tibet, it is a religious custom to cover the images of Buddha and any other images with clothing. However, since there was no such custom in India, Gandhi asked this question. The Tibetan delegates might have taken it as a joke so they simply laughed and did not reply.]

Q

The geshe should have replied saying that it is for the accumulation of merit.

A

(Mr. Sambo) The geshe might have been there also. Then we presented him the letter and other presents including some gold and silver, but he did not look at them. When we presented him a floor carpet he asked us whether it was made in Tibet. We told him that it was. Gandhi said that the carpet was very good.

Q

To whom did you give more gifts, Gandhi or Jawaharlal Nehru?

A

(Mr. Sambo) I don't remember exactly, but both of them were given three or four packages of gold and some coins of 5 sang and 10 sang.

Q

Did each of those packages contain one gold coin?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Probably three gold coins which were equal to 1 sang. Gandhi's house was very small. You had to either sit down or stand. There was a small carpet made from a



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material called gang and he said you can sit or stand whatever you like to. Some people sat on the carpet and the others had to sit on the floor.

Q

Was Gandhi sitting there kind of half naked?

A

(Mr. Sambo) He was sitting on a spotless white sheet like a Cayane in Kalimpong. There was a small table in front of him and a few pillows, otherwise there was nothing else. Then while we were there, they offered Gandhi a glass of milk which contained a few fruits, a few dry fruits. then Gandhi said humorously there is only one glass so if you take this glass I don't get any, so it is better that I take it. He said that and laughed and took the glass of milk himself and a few pieces of dates that were soaked in the milk. Then he said he is living in the villages. He is serving the people in the villages. Gandhi further said that he was invited to the ceremony for the independence of India and that they said that they were going to send an airplane to get me, but since I do not feel safe in an airplane, I was going to travel by train in the 3rd class compartment. Gandhi further told us that if you want to see India, you have to go to the Indian villages and see for yourself. If you see the cities, you will get the impression that the living conditions of the Indians are good, but that is not the true picture of India. Gandhi said, "In order to understand India, you must go and see the villages." He further said, "If there is anything I can do for you, let me know. If you want my opinion on anything, I will be happy to help. Though I am not a learned man, I am a very experienced man. I am old with lots of experience, so anything you ask me, I will advise you sincerely." At that time in the Asian Relations Conference one of the subjects they were discussing was whether or not any restrictions should be put on foreign visitors. Some had declared that anybody who likes to visit was welcome and our doors are open. But then some said they would not like to allow anyone to visit their land.

Q

That must have been only Tibet?

A

(Mr. Sambo) There were others too. About 30 odd nations attended the meeting. Each nation had about 5-8 delegates and altogether there were 400-500 people. Some of the delegates said we are a very small nation and a large influx of foreign visitors would cause a threat to the security of their country. We were among one of the ones who did not want

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foreign visitors into our country. So when we asked Gandhi his opinion, Gandhi told us, "As far as I am concerned, it is okay for me to just have my daily meal, but since you are working in politics you should allow visitors into your country and also you should go to other countries too. If you stop visitors, it is not good at all. In the future, there may not be any war, but if there would be a war, you will get many people to help you." When I was released from prison by the Chinese in 1980, the Political Consultative Conference of Tibet Autonomous had published a booklet about the Asian Relations Conference.

Q

Did you write something for this book?

A

(Mr. Sambo) I don't know who prepared it. It had already been published, probably a few years before my release.

(Mrs. Taring) Were you asked to go through the book and make corrections?

(Mr. Sambo) Although the book had been already published, I was told to read through it and attach my corrections on separate paper stickers. This book was titled, "The Actors in a Disgusting Drama." [tib. skyug bro ba'i zlos gar 'khrab ston byed mkhan]. In the book, they had written that the Guomindang delegates did not allow the Tibetan Delegates to hoist their national flag. I told the Chinese that it had been many years since the conference was held, so I don't remember much and moreover, I have been in jail for so long. There were many distortions in it, so it was difficult to make corrections. I told them that my colleague Küngala who was in the delegation might be able to recall some, so I will discuss it with him and submit our corrections. We read and discussed it. Küngala told me they had written so many things that had never happened. They said that the Tibetan delegates were humiliated, but such things never happened. So now if we correct it and write the true story it would go against the Chinese. It was difficult to leave it as it was, so we discussed what should be done.

Q

Was Küngala a member of the Political Consultative Conference?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Küngala was a member. So we made a few minor corrections, since it was not safe to make the proper corrections.

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Q

That is true. You can never know what will be the consequences. I heard that when the Guomindang delegates saw the Tibetan delegates they stood up.

A

(Mr. Sambo) No. Nothing happened like that. I then submitted this book to the Political Consulate Conference. Mr. Lhalu and Kapshöba were present. Lhalu asked me what I felt at that time, and now what has happened to Tibet's independence. I told him that I thought we were fortunate to be able to occupy seats with so many independent nations as a sovereign nation. Except for that, since so many years have passed, I don't remember anything. Kapshöba was present at this time. He didn't say a word and just listened. He kept quiet and left.

Q

Did you all stay until the meeting was completely over? I heard you people sang a song in the meeting too?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes. That was one evening. All of a sudden they asked everybody to enter the auditorium and we went in. Everybody played their national anthems and it was our turn to do so. Then we asked ourselves what to sing, and someone said, sing the folk song called Rigya Samtenling [tib. ri rgya bsam gtan gling]. We all agreed and sang it and left.

Q

Didn't you meet Nehru again, a second time before your departure? What did he say at that time?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Actually at that time I was not in Delhi. I had left two days earlier to make arrangements in Calcutta. During the meeting, they took photographs of all the participants. Many booklets and brochures of the conference were distributed. Below the photographs of each delegate, detailed introductory notes were added.

Q

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Was Jai Prakash Narain also there that time? Wasn't there a letter from the government send to him?

A

(Mr. Sambo) It must be. I didn't recognize him because I hadn't seen him. Sardar Patel must have been there also.

Q

Ratna Krishna must also have been there.

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes, he also must have been there.

Q

Gandhi was doing political work until they hoisted the independence flag.

A

( Mr. Sambo) I don't think so. He was saying the he is serving the people in the village, but there was the main politics.

(Mr. Taring) There must the Rajenda Prasad?

(Mr. Sambo) Yes, he was there.

Q

There must be the Jawahalar Naido and the Sarojana Naido?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes, they were there and there was a person called Abadori.

(Mrs. Taring) Oh. That must be Abdul Jina. He was like a Muslim. At that time, India and Pakistan had yet to be divided.

Q

(Mr. Taring) Mr. Sambo. Were you in the delegation? Was your father a Theiji?

A

(Mr. Sambo) I was a staff member then. I left a day before my father left and my father later went to meet Nehru and Gandhi. At that time, Gandhi had told my father that they

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have published a brochure of the Asian Relations Conference and I was further told that this brochure will be distributed throughout the world and that this brochure would serve as documentary proof of Tibet's independence in the future.

(Mrs. Taring) Pannikar had said in Nanjing that Tibet was part of China. It must be part of British policy.

Q

(Mr. Sambo) What did British policy say?

A

(Mrs. Taring) They said that it was suzerainty.

(Mr. Taring) This policy is being followed by the present government of India.

Q

What happened after that? Did Nehru say that time that the booklet was of great value and important for the future?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes. And there was also Saroji Naido. I left early to make accommodation arrangements for our leaders.

Q

Where did you stay in Calcutta?

A

(Mr. Sambo) In Calcutta we stayed in the Grand Hotel.

(Mr. Taring) Were those arrangements made by the Tibetan Government?

(Mr. Sambo) Only in Delhi did the Indian Government make the arrangements. Otherwise, all the traveling expenses were borne by our own government. After the meeting, some of the delegates were visiting other places while some of them were still there.

(Mr. Taring) At that time, had the Yügye Tashi Delek delegation returned or not?

(Mr. Sambo) They had already returned from China.

(Mr. Taring) What year did they go? Kusangtse and Tarkhang were sent for this purpose and Kusangtse's wife died in Nanjing.

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Q

I think that Richardson also interfered, right?

A

(Mr. Taring) What does this Yügye Tashi Delek mean?

(Mr. Sambo) It means to congratulate the victory of WWII, and it was to congratulate the allied nations who had won the war.

(Mr. Taring) What would have happened if they did not send the congratulations?

Q

This was suggested by Richardson. The congratulation was extended not only to China but also to Britain and to other allied nations. The Germans and the Japanese lost the war. So this was to congratulate the victors of the war.

A

(Mr. Sambo) This congratulatory delegation was sent in 1946.

Q

There were 10 people in this delegation including Kusangtse and Tarkhang.

Q

(Mrs. Taring) There was also Rinchen Sandutsang and Phala's middle son. I saw him in a photo. Yeshe Dargye [tib. ye shes dar rgyas] too was in the delegation, also Dorje Changö [tib. rdo rje bya dngos].

A

(Mr. Sambo) Phala was not a government official.

Q

During the Asia Relations conference, did you attend the meeting daily? Were you there when our delegates gave a speech in the meeting?

A

(Mr. Sambo) The leaders of the Tibetan delegation attended the meeting daily. The two assistants officers like myself did not attend it daily because they could not follow

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the things said in the meeting. Since they could not follow anything that was said in the meeting, there was no use in attending the meeting except to doze. Besides there were other things to do, like sending wireless messages, etc.

Q

Did the two leaders really attend the meeting daily?

A

(Mr. Sambo) The two leaders really did attend it daily.

Q

What dress did they wear in the meeting?

A

(Mr. Sambo) They were wearing the Tsechuma robe [tib. tshal phyu ma].

Q

Didn't you go out wearing Tibetan trousers with openings (at the fly) and with loose hair?

A

(Mr. Sambo) No, we didn't.

Q

Did the kungö or the two leaders of the Tibetan delegation have their hair knot [tib. spa lcog]? Was it a symbol of rank?

A

(Mr. Sambo) The two leaders had their hair knots.

(Mrs. Taring) I saw in a photograph that they had their hair knots. Since Kyibuk studied in London, he was asked why he did not have the hair knot like the other two had. This question was very significant in the sense that it gave the impression that the government didn't give any importance to those who were educated or intellectual.

Q

Usually what hair style did you have?

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A

(Sambo) We had the Kongpo hair style [tib. long skra] with two braids wrapped around the head.

Q

I heard that the Indians asked the Tibetan delegates whether the brocade chuba they wore was woven in Tibet.

A

(Mr. Sambo) At that time my father wore a thin brown woolen material woven in Lhasa.

Q

Didn't you wear brocade chubas?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Probably we wore brocade at ceremonies.

Q

You must have worn it when you visited Gandhi?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Probably we did.

Q

How long did you stay in Calcutta?

A

(Mr. Sambo) I stayed in Calcutta for 5 or 6 days and came back.

Q

Did the participants have parties among themselves?

A

(Mr. Sambo) There were no such parties or invitations.



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Q

Were the British still in India at that time?

A

(Mr. Sambo) They invited the Foreign Affairs officers to dinner.

Q

Did you invite only the Foreign Affairs officers and not Nehru or any other delegates to the dinner.

A

(Mr. Sambo) No it was only for the Foreign Affairs officers.

Q

Was there any plan to keep a Tibetan representative in India after the independence of India?

A

(Mr. Sambo) There were no such plans.

Q

Did you meet the Yügye Tashi Delek delegates in Calcutta?

A

(Mr. Sambo) I met them on their way to China.

Q

Did you have any talks with them about whether they attended the Guomindang meeting in Beijing?

A

(Mr. Sambo) I heard that they were given orders from the Tibetan Government not to attend the meeting.

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Q

They did attend the meeting. Probably they attended the meeting as observers.

A

(Mr. Sambo) It was said that the government told them not to attend the meeting, but it seems they attended the meeting during the first two days.

Q

But then they were given orders not to attend the meeting?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Probably a wireless was sent to them.

Q

Are you sure the government sent a wireless?

A

(Mr. Sambo) I am not certain, since I was not in the delegation.

Q

According to what I heard, they attended the Guomindang meeting but as observers. The reason why they attended the meeting was, as stated by them, that they heard that many of the Tashilhunpo people were attending the meeting and were doing a lot of the things so they went to the meeting to see what they were really doing.

A

(Mr. Sambo) I heard something like that. However, I heard that they did not sign any documents of the meeting.

Q

Of course, since they were observers they could not sign any of the meeting's documents.

A

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(Mr. Sambo) At the end of the meeting, the participants had to sign the resolutions of the meeting, but our Tibetan delegates avoided doing that and did not sign.

Q

After the Asian Relations Conference, you probably submitted a report to the government. What were the main points in the report?

A

(Mr. Sambo) In the report we mentioned that we asked whether or not there will be a discussion on the border issue and that if there will be a discussion, we are ready to talk and had brought the related documentation with us. But we were told that the meeting was convened only to introduce all the Asian nations to each other and establish friendly relations among them. Hence there were no talks on the border issue.

Q

The very name of the conference states very clearly that it was only Asian Relations Conference, so there would not be any major agenda to discuss and pass resolutions. Did you mention what Nehru had told you?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Another thing mentioned in the report was that Gandhi had asked for full a volume of the Kangyur text, preferably in Hindi, if not in English.

Q

Did you tell him that there was no translation of Kangyur in either the Hindi or English languages?

A

(Mr. Sambo) We did not say that. They had asked us to tell the Kashag about this. So probably they might have sent it. However I don't think we ever had time to translate it. I am not certain whether it was sent or not.

Q

So in 1947 you returned from the Asian Relations Conference. Then what happened in 1948?

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A

(Mr. Sambo) 1948 was the beginning of the deportation of the Chinese from Tibet. At that time the Trungtsi were meeting very often. Then also the petitions to the Kashag were often stopped.

Q

Wasn't it the period when they took the oath and placed the turquoise statue of the Buddha on their heads?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes, it was during that time. It was probably in the month of March or April. At that time there was talk that they were meeting very often. We were very young.

Q

Did that draw the attention of others?

A

(Mr. Sambo) At that time the Trungtsi were meeting very often and everyone wondered what was going on? Then around 1947, things became more evident.

Q

Did this problem remain their active consideration? Did they really keep it a secret?

A

(Mr. Sambo) So, around second or third month of the Tibetan calendar, they were constantly meeting, and judging from their reactions, it was evident that they were not thinking about demoting somebody and promoting somebody like the Tibetan proverb, "Put down the old man and pull up the old woman." [tib. spo sgyel rmo bslangs], but their faces showed that they were constantly thinking over some serious problem. Some people noticed that they were constantly meeting, which became more open after 2-3 months.

Q

Had they been meeting for about a year before this?

A

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(Mr. Sambo) Yes. Not only were they meeting constantly, but they also consulted the Kashag and the petitions were sometimes stopped.

Q

What kinds of problem were they looking at that took them a full year?

A

(Mr. Sambo) It was not that easy to accomplish the job. During that time, though there were very few Japanese and American spies, there were a large number of Guomindang and Communist Chinese spies. So to trace them all would definitely take a long time.

Q

But this thing could have been carried out by one man, so why should they meet so often?

A

(Mr. Sambo) One man could not make any decision at all. Moreover, one of those days it happened to be the Dalai Lama's birthday. All the senior government officials had to attend this ceremony. After this, the Dalai Lama's family sponsored a picnic near the river. On that occasion, while the Tshipön were walking behind the river dike, suddenly they heard gunshots which frightened them and they went away.

Q

Were the shots aimed at them?

A

(Mr. Sambo) No. Some people were having a shooting competition on the other side of the river dike and they were not aware of them. The gun shot frightened them. The Tshipön and their servants went around to check by climbing the dike and discovered some Tibetan's practicing shooting at targets. The Tshipön immediately ordered them to be arrested. These Tibetans turned out to be khatsara Tibetan-Nepalese mixed breeds. At that time, Lukhangwa was also there. Ngabö caught one of them, snatched his rifle and beat him with its butt. He beat furiously all the time saying, "If you are Nepalese, take this." All this time the other Tshipön were watching and laughing among themselves. After that, they were sent to Shöl Legung. They were released after two or three days. Since they had done nothing illegal, no court action could be taken against them. This episode

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aroused public suspicion about their frequent meetings. At that time, we were saying that the frequent meetings had to do with the foreigners issue rather than domestic intrigue. People were asking themselves whether the Tibetan-Nepalese were indulging in some illegal activities, judging by the Tsipön's overreaction at the shooting incident. Then about a month later, the orders for deportation of the Chinese and foreign spies were issued.

Q

Wasn't that when the Communist China were propagating through the radio about liberating Tibet?

A

(Mr. Sambo) No, not yet. China was in a civil war, but it was almost certain that the Guomindang would lose the war.

Q

Did the Tibetan Government perform huge rituals? Also, was an extra Mönlam called? During that time I remember that Nechung came and stirred something with his spear [tib. rten mdung] and the large cauldron made out of cast-iron that was used for brewing tea for the monks was turned upside down [tib. tshogs khro mgo mjug slog] signifying a curse against the Chinese. This ritual was supposed to bring bad luck for the Chinese.

A

(Mr. Taring) It was most probably before the time when the Dalai Lama went to Yadong. This particular function was held in the Ewam Hall and was presided over by Khunu Rinpoche.

Q

The ritual of turning over the monastic cauldron was not performed at that time. It was the time when the effigies of the Chinese were turned upside down and ritual prayers were performed.

A

(Mr. Sambo) It was probably 1949. It was a ritual to avoid the war [tib. dmag zlog zhabs brtan].

Q

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Was it before or after the Chinese broadcast that they will liberate Tibet?

A

(Mr. Sambo) It was the same year, 1947, when the Chinese made their propaganda of liberating Tibet.

Q

It was also the year when the Chinese were expelled from Tibet. In the same year, around October, the government of the People's Republic of China was established. What did they first announce in the Radio? I mean from Beijing.

A

(Mr. Sambo) Geshe Sherab [tib. shes bar] made the first broadcast from Beijing.

Q

Geshe Sherab tried to come to Tibet before, but had been stopped at Nagchu. Was this true?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Surkhang Rimshi was the depön.

Q

Wasn't Surkhang one of the Geshe Sherab's former students?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes. It was during the Regent Taktra's time.

Q

Is it true that Taktra and Geshela did not get along well?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes, that's true.

Q

Was it because both of them were equally learned scholars?

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A

(Mr. Sambo) Taktra was good, but I think Geshela was better.

Q

Maybe Geshela was a better scholar, but don't you think that Taktra was equally learned, possessing all the necessary requirements of merit which a scholar should have?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Geshela led the team of scholars who edited the Kangyur.

Q

Taktra too was among the team.

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes, he was among the team. It was during the 13th Dalai Lama's reign. They could not agree on certain points. During the argument, Taktra called Geshela 'an ass.'

Q

I heard Geshela retorted by saying that he (Taktra) was 'an ass.'

A

(Mr. Sambo) According to this, it seems Geshela could not measure up well to Taktra.

Q

That may be true. The 13th Dalai Lama was said to have been very fond of making corrections on others' work. Although he himself was very learned, yet he never hesitated to make corrections on others' work, even if the other person was more learned. Geshela composed the contents note for the Kangyur.

Q

[NOTE The Tibetan style of writing notes on contents is not the sense of contents in the West, especially the one for Kangyur. It serves the purpose of a detailed forward, including editor's and publisher's notes for the 100 odd volumes of the Kangyur. So the Dalai Lama



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made corrections on Geshela's composition and it became worse, which irritated Geshela, so Geshela asked the Dalai Lama why he was making such corrections.]

A

(Mrs. Taring) The corrections might have been done on the Shöl edition and not on the Derge xylograph edition.

(Mr. Sambo) They were not correcting the Kangyur, but simply editing the new xylograph edition. All the foreword and conclusion and mid poems were drafted by Geshela, but was published under the name of the Dalai Lama. So despite the fact that Geshela resented the Dalai Lama making the corrections on his composition, the Dalai Lama still kept on making the corrections. Even that was not completed.

Q

Is it true that Geshela was later put under some sort of house arrest?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Something like that happened and he was not allowed to move outside Gompasar [tib. dgon pa gsar], a small retreat center in the north of Norbulinga.

Q

After they could not complete the contents notes [tib. dkar chag] of the Kangyur, even after many years, finally one Amdo Jone Lama called the tutor Detri Lobsang Gyatso [tib. blo bzang rgya mtsho] to Norbulinga.

A

(Mr. Sambo) This lama seems to have been a very respectable scholar and a reasonably nice man.

Q

Who invited him? Was it Taktra who invited him?

A

(Mr. Sambo) He was invited by Reting, and for a while he remained without anyone taking notice.

Q

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Hadn't Reting already resigned by then?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Oh yes. Reting was already out, so then it must be Kündeling or someone else who had invited him. It could not be Kündeling also, because the previous Kündeling had expired by then, and the present Kündeling had not yet come onto the scene. Therefore, most probably it was Reting who invited him. However, it was not Taktra who invited him.

Q

However, he was picked up by the famous Phabongkha and taken to Chupsang [tib. chu bzang] where Phabongkha took teachings from him, mainly on Sanskrit Grammar [tib. sgra]. He told his students that he had studied this for 12 long years, giving up his normal practices including reading, etc. He told his students that he wanted the same thing from them. On the first day of his teaching, about 50 students attended but on the second day the number dropped to only 20 students. He first started teaching the Ngagdrön [tib. ngag sgron], the rules of spellings. By the time he was about to finish the Ngagdrön, two government officers, one tsidrung and one lay official had come to see him. He interrupted his teachings for a while, and when he resumed his teachings, his appearance had changed to a dark and unhappy one. The officials were sent by the government to invite him to Norbulinga, but he said, "This was the ultimate gift [tib. bdag rkyen] which the Dalai Lama can bestow on any individual, but for me, it was the ultimate scolding which he could inflict on a simple monk." Then he stopped his teachings and said that now we can't carry on the teachings on Sanskrit Grammar. He finished the Ngagdrön teaching very fast and left for Norbulinga. When he reached Norbulinga, he immediately started the work of composing the notes for the Kangyur and tried to finish the notes for 10 volumes per day and submitted them to the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama told him that he should continue where Geshe Sherab Gyatso had left off, and said that it should be written in such a way that the style of the poems composed by Geshela should not be changed or, in other words, any change in the style should not be noticeable. No one should be able to point out that it was done by two different persons. Furthermore, the Dalai Lama told him that it was a few years work, and that he should not rush it. He obeyed the first two points but the last order was not agreeable to him, since he didn't want to stay long in Lhasa. Then finally he submitted his drafts. The Dalai Lama as usual made some corrections and sent it back to him. When he saw his work with the corrections, he exclaimed, 'Oh my god! It has been ruined!' Despite this, the Dalai Lama was very fond of him and almost every day paid

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a personal visit to his residence. One day the Jone Lama told the Dalai Lama that, "I think there is not much left for me to draft and for you to correct."

A

(Mr. Sambo) That lama was a really learned man.

(Mrs. Taring) Then what happened? Did he pass away?

Q

No. He didn't pass away, but I think he didn't like the Dalai Lama correcting his work all the time.

A

(Mr. Sambo) The Dalai Lama corrected everything, even the normal routine files. Therefore, government officials were extremely careful with whatever they were submitting to him. The Dalai Lama was a scholar of high caliber as far as the Tibetan Language was concerned. His poetry, grammar, composition and calligraphy were flawless. However, when he met another scholar, it was his nature to delay in approving of (their work) and sanctioning them.

Q

It must be true, because once I had a discussion with Trijang Rinpoche who told me that once he was asked to compose a certain thing for the Dalai Lama. He said that at that time he was young and very careful about his writing and composition, so he wrote it very carefully, checked it himself, and he felt quite certain that his piece of composition could not be improved. He felt sure that it was an excellent piece and he even thought that he was possessed by the deity Sarasutra [tib. dbyangs can ma]. He said that when it was returned to him with the corrections by the Dalai Lama, certain phrases and idioms used in it seemed misunderstood and many of the good idioms had been substituted with inferior ones. As a result, certain verses became meaningless. However, since it was the Dalai Lama's corrections, he had to leave it as it was.

A

(Mrs. Taring) Trijang Rinpoche must have been very young then.

(Mr. Sambo) He was young, but his compositions were excellent.

Q

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Coming back to the main topic, it shows that the 13th Dalai Lama was very fond of making corrections and Geshe Sherab did not like it and as a result he was put under house arrest. So Geshe Sherab fled to China. Much later, it was Geshe Sherab who was broadcasting the Chinese propaganda on the liberation of Tibet.

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes.

Q

What did he say on the radio?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Geshela announced on the radio that Tibet will be liberated from the clutches of imperialists, and that the imperialist forces in Tibet will be ousted. These were the main points in the message. Then they further announced that the Tibetan people are our blood brothers and that Tibetans will gain much if they join the People's Republic of China in which they can enjoy equality in living standards, etc. These were the main messages broadcast on the radio by Geshe Sherab. Rasa Gyagen [tib. ra sa rgya rgan] also said quite a lot on the radio in reply to the Chinese announcements on the radio.

Q

Who was Rasa Gyagen?

A

(Mr. Sambo) He was a secretary in the Foreign Office (tib. Chigyel Legung [phyi rgyal las khungs]).

Q

When was this radio station in Lhasa installed?

A

(Mr. Taring) The radio station was installed at the 'new military camp'. It was the year when the initial trouble started in Kham [1950].

Q

Was it really a radio?

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A

(Mr. Taring) It was a radio. Anyway there was radio contact between Chamdo and Lhasa. It was a wireless station. At that time, when Trijang Rinpoche was in Chamdo, Kapshöba had some talks with him through the wireless. So, Kapshöba prostrated and even wept while talking through the wireless. That happened because wireless was a new phenomenon in Tibet. Ford Sahib was in Chamdo. In Lhasa, Kyibug and Fox Sahib were manning the station. It was a portable radio station. Some people from Kalimpong worked for the radio station voluntarily. I heard they were sent to Tö (Western Tibet). The son of Dingja [tib. lding bya] was also among them.

(Mr. Sambo) That is true. Dingja too was among them.

Q

Was that really a radio station or a wireless station?

A

(Mr. Taring) It was a radio station. You could either send a telegram message or broadcast through it. There was one each in Lhasa, Chamdo and Tö.

Q

What was the main purpose of setting up this station?

A

(Mr. Taring) The reason to set up the radio station was that we felt the need to be open and have publicity abroad. They sent Kyibuk to the Foreign Office as its interpreter. I am not definite when they broadcasted daily. At that time, those who could broadcast were invited to do so. At that time a few people who had come from Kalimpong were sent to the Tö area. Some of them were sent to Lhasa and Chamdo.

Q

Were they broadcasting from three places?

A

(Mr. Taring) It is true. It was broadcast from three different places.

Q

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Was it only in Tibetan and not in any other languages?

A

(Mr. Taring) It was done only in Tibetan.

(Mr. Sambo) It was broadcast in Tibetan and then translated into English.

(Mr. Taring) Kyibuk was the translator.

(Mr. Sambo) Fox Sahib too used to broadcast saying things like: "This is the Lhasa Lubuk [tib. klu sbug] broadcast, 9 o'clock," So during our talks, someone said that when they announced, this is Lhasa Lubuk time and this is Lhasa Ramoche time, outsiders might have imagined that Lhasa is very large and that the difference between Lubuk and Ramoche might be very great, which it is actually was not.

Q

Could you tell how many radios there were in Lhasa?

A

(Mr. Taring) There were many.

Q

What did the Tibetan government announce on the radio in response to the Chinese propaganda broadcasts which were made frequently?

A

(Mr. Sambo) The Tibetan government replied on the radio saying, "Tibet is our land and we can look after it ourselves." Also they would say that there are no foreign imperialist forces or domination in our country. I remember the exact wordings which in Tibetan ran, "Even if the waves of rumor may rage violently, the determination of our mind will be steadfast as a mountain and cannot be shaken." [tib. 'chal gtam skad ch'i lba rlab rdrag tu khrug kyang/ bsam pa'i dam bca' g.yo med ri bo ltar brtan pa yod]. This was the exact wording.

It was further announced that, "If the Chinese indulge in the act of a bigger insect devouring a smaller ones, then we are determined to retaliate by fighting back and even if all the men become exhausted, the women will fight." [tib. 'bu ches chung zos byed kyi yod na/ pho zad mo la ma thug par rgyag gi yin] This fiery rhetoric was announced on the radio.

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Q

I also remember it was said, "We will fight until our hands are exhausted and the shoulder is reached." [tib. lag zad dpung la thug kyang 'dzing gi yin]

A

(Mr. Taring) When the Chinese reached Chamdo, frantic news of the Chinese invasion reached Lhasa while the kalön were having their Kashag Picnic. So the kadrung in Lhasa replied that the kalön are not available since they are all at the picnic. The kadrung from Chamdo exclaimed, "What picnic? Shit picnic." Which showed that the situation in Chamdo must be very critical. The wireless did serve the purpose of sending messages.

Q

I also remember an incident: I heard that during the picnic, Tsidrung Yarkyi [tib. dbyar skyid] and all those present at the picnic were sitting around a radio including Talama. While they were listening to the radio, it caught a wireless message which all listened to. The message was from Panda. It said, "Please request a favor from Talama." The other side replied, "Yes, we requested Talama properly and even offered him 30 boxes of tea leaves." This conversation on the radio was heard by all those present and Talama was visibly embarrassed.

A

(Mr. Taring) Anyway, the wireless was used both by the government and private individuals.

Q

So in Calcutta, you received orders from Lhasa to proceed to Hong Kong. But when Mr. Taring and Shakabpa were leaving for Hong Kong, you were both stopped suddenly, even when the Indian Government gave the exit permit. Why?

A

(Mr. Taring) The exit permit was given [mistakenly] due to some oversight.

Q

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Then Driyü [tib. 'bri yul] and Kungö Gusung Depön returned back and continued their talks with the Indian Government. At that time the Chinese circulated booklets of the 17-Point Agreement during a dinner party. Until that time, were you, Mr. Taring, in Delhi?

A

(Mr. Taring) I was in Delhi.

Q

Was there not any telegram message or instructions from the government?

A

(Mr. Taring) It all took a long time, during which time Chamdo was lost and Ngabö was arrested. All this happened while we were stuck in Delhi. While staying like this, we were invited by the Chinese representative, who was the Charge d'Affairs, for a meal. During that meal we were informed about the 17-Point Agreement.

(Mrs. Taring) It was not about the 17-Point Agreement, but they said that any talks with the Common Program [ch. gong tong gang ling] as the basis could be held anywhere.

Q

What does Common Program mean?

A

(Mr. Sambo) It meant the constitution of China.

Q

Was it the constitution of the CCP?

A

(Mr. Sambo) It was the constitution of China overall. [the precursor constitution]

(Mr. Taring) At that time, the Dalai Lama had left for Yadong. While staying in Calcutta, we presented the facts proving Tibet to be independent to various journalists. Furthermore, we publicized the Chinese illegal claims and invasion of Tibet. Then when we reached Delhi, we had secret talks with various representatives of different countries. They told us that unless India, which is the closest neighbor of Tibet, takes the first initiative, they can't do anything to help us. They said that they were countries situated across the ocean and there was no possibility that they could help us.



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Q

Who said this, the British? Or the Americans?

A

(Mr. Taring) That is absolutely correct. Burma was there too.

(Mrs. Taring) As far as I can remember, after Chamdo was taken, Ngabö was arrested. Then Kusangtse or someone else was sent from here [India] by sea, and simultaneously Kungö Sambo and Nendrön were sent by land [to Beijing].

(Mr. Taring) They were sent from Yadong.

(Mrs. Taring) If I remember correctly, in between that, the delegation from Delhi was asked to return to Yadong for consultation. The two leaders of the delegation were meeting continuously. I am not aware of what they were discussing, but from what I heard from outside sources, Kungö Tsipön pretended to have fallen from his horse and did not report. At the same time some people were saying that he was not hurt at all. Whatever the case may be, he did not attend any meeting and neither did he report his discussions at Delhi.

(Mr. Sambo) It was after our return from Delhi to Kalimpong and the leaders of the delegation had reported their discussions to the concerned authorities and returned back to Kalimpong. We were also in Kalimpong when the Central Committee's representative, Representative Zhang [Jingwu] reached Kalimpong by way of Calcutta. Our Government had ordered us to return to Tibet. Kungö Shakabpa said that he planned to excuse himself and later resigned from his post. Also Panda hesitated to return, but we returned as ordered.

Q

Who is 'we'?

A

(Mr. Taring) Myself, Driyü and the representative of Ganden Monastery.

(Mrs. Taring) I met Representative [ch. daibiao] Zhang and his interpreter and the Charge D'Affair from Delhi in Darjeeling in a restaurant in the shoe shop. He said 'hello' to me. He knew a little bit of English. They had some interpreter with them. Phüntso was one of them.

(Mr. Taring) The Dalai Lama went to Beijing in 1954 and returned a year later.

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(Mr. Sambo) Sometime around this time, Surkhang Surpa and Chönphe Thubten went to visit the Dalai Lama.

Q

Are you referring to Tsidrun Chönphe Thubten?

A

(Mr. Sambo) No. I am referring to the Trunyichemmo.

Q

Where did they go, and what for?

A

(Mr. Sambo) It must have been a confidential mission.

(Mrs. Taring) I never heard such things!

(Mr. Taring) Yes. I heard something like this. Anyway this is how it happened that we could not go to Hong Kong.